

Message Text

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46

ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3273

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 4960

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SW

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS OF US ELECTION

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER PALME NOV. 6 AT HIS RIKSDAG OFFICE. I HAD EARLIER INFORMED THE PRIME MINISTER OF MY DEPARTURE NEXT WEEK FOR WASHINGTON FOR CONSULTATION, AND HE HAD ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM PRIOR TO MY DEPARTURE.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER APPEARED EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THE RESULTS OF THE US ELECTIONS. IN REPLY TO HIS DIRECT QUESTION, I CONCEDED THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS OBVIOUSLY HAD NOT STRENGTHENED THE ADMINISTRATION, BUT STRESSED THAT THE RESULTS WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE IN OUR FOREIGN POLICY. I POINTED OUT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS SUFFICIENT SUPPORT IN CONGRESS FOR HIS MAJOR POLICIES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

2. CONTINUING, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THERE WERE TWO ASPECTS OF THE US ELECTIONS WHICH CONCERNED HIM. FIRST WAS THE LOW VOTING TURNOUT, WHICH WAS DESCRIBED IN THE SWEDISH PRESS AS LESS THAN 40 PERCENT. (I GRANTED THAT THIS WAS REGRETTABLE.) SECONDLY, AND OF MORE IMMEDIATE SIGNIFICANCE, WAS THE IMPACT OF THE ELECTIONS ON THE SOVIETS.

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PALME DESCRIBED THE SOVIETS AS "CONSERVATIVE" IN THEIR

OUTLOOK, AND SAID THEY PREFER TO DEAL WITH KNOWN QUANTITIES. COULD NOT THE SOVIETS, HE ASKED, INTERPRET THE STRONG DEMOCRATIC TIDE AS REFLECTING A BROAD SHIFT IN US PUBLIC OPINION AND POSSIBLY A CHANGE IN BASIC FOREIGN POLICIES? PALME SAID, "WE IN THE WEST" UNDERSTAND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND ARE THEREFORE NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF SHIFTS IN FOREIGN POLICY, BUT THE SOVIETS LACK SUCH UNDERSTANDING. PALME ADDED THAT THE ENTRANCE INTO CONGRESS OF SOME 40-ODD NEW MEMBERS, WITH NO EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE MATTERS, COULD ALSO BE DISTURBING TO SOVIETS.

4. I REPLIED THAT IN A SENSE, EVERY NEW CONGRESS IS AN "EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE" FOR NEWCOMERS. I EMPHASIZED THAT THERE IS A BROAD CONSENSUS IN THE US FOR THE MAJOR LINES OF OUR POLICY FURTHERMORE, WE DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY CHANGES IN THE MAKE-UP OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP.

5. COMMENT: AS HAS BEEN IMPRESSED UPON ME SINCE MY ARRIVAL HERE, THE PRIME MINISTER, LIKE MANY OTHER SWEDES, IS FASCINATED BY AMERICAN POLITICS AND POLICIES. (THE SWEDES, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT THEY ARE THE MOST "AMERICAN" OF ALL THE EUROPEAN NATIONS.) THE US ELECTIONS WERE NO EXCEPTION TO THIS, AND LEADING SWEDES FOLLOWED THE CAMPAIGN AND THE OUTCOME WITH AVID INTEREST. HOWEVER, I AM NOT CERTAIN THAT THIS INTEREST NECESSARILY EQUATES WITH A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE US AND ITS POLICIES. THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMED GENUINELY CONCERNED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC GAINS MIGHT INDICATE A SHIFT IN AMERICAN INTEREST AWAY FROM FOREIGN POLICY TO DOMESTIC ISSUES. OF GREATER INTEREST, PERHAPS, IS HIS PERCEPTION OF THE SOVIET REACTION AND OF THE SOVIET LIKING FOR DEALING WITH KNOWN QUANTITIES. WHILE I BELIEVE I MAY HAVE QUIETED THE PRIME MINISTER'S UNEASINESS ABOUT ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN US POLICY, HE SEEMED STILL CONCERNED RE THE SOVIET INTERPRETATION OF THE ELECTIONS AND THEREFORE OF THEIR POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR DETENTE.
STRAUSZ-HUPE

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